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SUBJECT: SIERRA LEONE: TALKING POINTS FOR FEBRUARY 9 UNSC
DEBATE

¶1. USUN may draw from the talking points in para 2 for the February 9 UN Security Council debate on Sierra Leone. It is separately requested that USUN meet with the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) Executive Representative Michael von Schulenberg (who will be in New York Feb. 9-13). End action request.

¶2. Begin points:

-- The United States commends the work of UNIPSIL for all the support it has provided to the government and people of Sierra Leone in helping the nation transition into a stable, prosperous, democratic country. The United Nations has played a vital role in stability in this post-conflict nation, especially through its Police and Democracy and Governance programs.

-- As a key supporter of the Peace Building Commission, the United States is pleased to see that Sierra Leone, with the UN's assistance, has completed a number of priority projects and begun implementation of others.

-- The United States welcomes the "Joint Vision" joint planning initiative as it is an important step in achieving the full potential of the integrated mission concept.

-- We are particularly satisfied with the role UNIPSIL will play, along with ourselves and other partners, in monitoring the Anti-Corruption Commission under new, strong leadership at President Koroma's instruction.

-- The United States commends the Government of Sierra Leone for its efforts to reform its justice system, promote anti-corruption efforts, and increase human rights and the rule of law.

-- The United Nations programs have been essential to the international community's ability to work harmoniously in various parts of the country.

-- We note the important leadership role the UN/ERSG took during the 2007 and 2008 national and municipal elections. With the availability of UN helicopters and vans, Ambassadors, High Commissioners and other Chiefs of Mission were able to meet with provincial political leaders and organizations in a timely fashion.

-- The presence of international monitors and observers was critical to ameliorating potentially violent situations and to ensuring gender equity through support of women's forums across the nation.

-- UN Radio has also been essential in transmitting information to rural communities on elections, women's rights, health, and education. We support the transfer of this service to the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC), especially in light of the draft legislation that

ensures the service will continue operating under international standards. We support the use of the unallocated PeaceBuilding funds for the development of this national public broadcasting service for Sierra Leone.

-- We welcome the efforts of the Mano River Union (MRU) Secretariat's recent summit held under the chairmanship of Liberian president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. UNIPSIL assistance was critical in both organization and transportation in order to allow this still-fragile state to bring together sub-regional leaders. The MRU summit addressed border security and Confidence Building Measures sorely needed as Sierra Leone continues to face potential incursion along its Yenga border with Guinea.

-- Concurrently, along with donors, strengthening the Economic and Social Sectors is carried out by entities such as UNDP and UNICEF as well as WFP. The United States works closely in food security and health as well as education with its UNIPSIL partners.

-- We continue to be concerned about the increased use of Sierra Leone as a transshipment point for drug trafficking of illegal narcotics from South America to Europe. We welcome UNIPSIL's collaboration with the Sierra Leone Drug Interdiction Task Force, and continue to offer our assistance in addressing this threat to Sierra Leone's security. We welcome a regional approach to addressing security issues, in particular narco-trafficking.

-- We also welcome the efforts of the UN system to coordinate with the World Bank and Government of Sierra Leone on developing a system of monitoring and controlling international ship movements.

-- The recent global financial crisis heightens the need for donor coordination in Sierra Leone. In concert with UNIPSIL, we look forward to formalizing such coordination working in tandem with key Government officials, including President Koroma and his Cabinet.

-- The security of Sierra Leone is critical to the security of the MRU Basin and to West Africa. Safety and stability create the atmosphere for growth education and respect for human rights.

-- The United States fully supports UNIPSIL, and welcomes the permanent appointment of Michael Schulenberg as the Executive Representative of the Secretary General. We urge the UN to quickly staff vacant UNIPSIL positions.

CLINTON